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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education (CHOICE) project, the scope of its activities, and evaluations of the effectiveness of those activities are described. One major project goal was to encourage and facilitate institutional efforts to provide more complete and accurate information to prospective students. Project activities were organized in six primary areas: work with participating institutions, national clearinghouse on student consumer information, research on the role of information on student college choice, national linking service, dissemination activities, and impact on federal and state policy regarding student information. Research projects that pertained to the role of information in students' college choice concerned: the effectiveness and accuracy of college admissions practices; a case study of influences on students' college choice; and an assessment of college recruitment literature. Institutional outcomes for the 10 participating institutions in Project CHOICE include: the creation and development of new publications or products (e.g., films); the revision or expansion of existing publications; and the use of data for internal decision-making purposes. Goals of the linking service include: making low-cost consulting services available to institutions that wished to review and improve the information they provide to students, and to attract and involve a second-wave of 60 participating institutions. The staffing and location of Project CHOICE at the University of Michigan are described. Dissemination activities are described and suggestions for the management of large-scale, multi-institutional projects are given. (SW)

ED207471

FINAL REPORT OF PROJECT CHOICE

A CENTER FOR HELPING ORGANIZATIONS IMPROVE CHOICE IN EDUCATION

by

David W. Chapman
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PROJECT CHOICE

FINAL REPORT

Section I

a. Purpose and Scope of Project CHOICE

b. An Evaluation of Project CHOICE Activities

The final report of Project CHOICE is divided into three sections. Section I describes the purpose of the Project, the scope of its activities, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of those activities. Section II consists of a compilation of the articles, papers, and other publications of the project. In Section III, CHOICE team members from participating institutions describe the process of improving college information based on their experience and work in the project. Section III is presented in the form of a monograph entitled Improving College Information for Prospective Students, published by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

The following document represents Section I of the Project CHOICE final report.

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INTRODUCTION

The Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education, Project CHOICE, was supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to assist colleges and universities improve the information they provide to prospective students. A three year project, CHOICE operated from September, 1977, through August, 1980. This section of the report describes the purpose of the Project, the scope of its activities, and evaluations of the effectiveness of those activities. The purpose of this section is both to document the activities of Project CHOICE and to identify those aspects of our experience that may assist other large-scale multi-institutional projects that FIPSE might fund in the future. The section is divided into four parts. Part I describes the background and events that led up to the proposal for Project CHOICE. Part II describes the purposes and activities of the Project. Part III identifies the activities undertaken by the institutions participating in Project CHOICE and both the short and long-term outcomes realized by those institutions. It will also examine the characteristics of successful campus projects. Part IV describes the staffing and location of the Project. Part V offers some observations, based on the Project CHOICE experience, on the management of large-scale, multi-institutional projects. A series of appendices contain additional material relevant to the design and effectiveness of Project CHOICE activities.

PART I. BACKGROUND

Since 1974 efforts to provide new types of information which may facilitate student choice among postsecondary educational options have been stimulated by 1) increased availability of need-based student aid; 2) a diversification of both student clientele and educational opportunities; 3) practices of questionable ethics in student recruiting fostered by intensified competition among postsecondary institutions; 4) legal action by students which has challenged the accuracy of information supplied by institutions; and 5) federal and state attempts to regulate dissemination of information to students in hopes of providing increased protection for students through a "truth-in-advertising" strategy.

Federal and state regulatory efforts have been resisted by institutions on the grounds that no single model of information disclosure should be applied to institutions which differ in purpose, student clientele, and location. However, at the same time, many non-profit colleges and universities have begun to admit that institutional practices concerning the information disseminated to students need reexamination in light of changing times and new public pressures. Both because they hope to avoid extensive governmental regulation and because the recent publicity attending such governmental attempts has made them more conscious of professional and educational obligations to students, institutions are increasingly eager to develop new and more meaningful ways of communicating with prospective students.

Still, progress toward developing more complete and accurate information has not been rapid. This is so largely because there has been a dearth of knowledge about how students actually use information in college

decisions, about the impact that more candid disclosure by colleges of their strengths and weaknesses would have on college enrollments, and about the ways in which colleges can cooperatively work toward changing traditional practices.

To help address these issues, the Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE) sponsored The National Task Force on Better Information for Student Choice (National Project I) as an institution-based effort to identify ways in which colleges could improve their information for students. From 1975 to 1977 the eleven demonstration institutions and four resource agencies engaged in this project took some first steps in developing new models for presenting more detailed and more candid information to prospective postsecondary students. National Task Force members made a substantial contribution in calling attention to the need for institution-based efforts, in determining the information students believe they need, and in highlighting the need for the collection of reasonably comparable information across institutions.

Despite the considerable progress of the National Task Force, the process by which students use information in postsecondary decisions was still not well understood. Moreover, a clearer understanding of the issues colleges encounter and the processes colleges find most effective in improving campus information needed further study and clarification. These issues became even more pressing with the enactment of the Educational Amendments of 1976 which included "Student Consumer Information Provisions." These provisions contained a series of encompassing statements about future information that should be presented to students upon their request, who are applying for financial aid. Secondly, the authorization of the federal/ state Educational Information Centers (also contained the Education Amendments

of 1976) made the initiation of procedures for preparation and dissemination of candid and effective information of crucial importance. This led one member of the National Task Force, Dr. Joan Stark, to propose a continuation and extension of the work begun by the Task Force in the form of a three year project called the Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education, Project CHOICE. The Project was funded by FIPSE in 1977.

PART II. PURPOSE AND ACTIVITIES OF CHOICE

One major goal of CHOICE was to encourage and facilitate institutional efforts to provide more complete and accurate information to prospective students. A second major goal was to utilize the understandings gained from carefully monitoring institutional information improvement efforts to assist other colleges engaging in information improvement activities and to assist in the formulation of policy alternatives for consideration by educational and governmental groups.

To accomplish these goals, the Project activities were organized in six primary areas: A) Work with participating institutions, B) National Clearinghouse on student consumer information, C) Research on the role of information on student college choice, D) National Linking Service, E) Dissemination activities, and F) Impact on federal and state policy regarding student information. Each of these will now be discussed. Figure 1 provides an overall time-frame of the Project activites.

A. WORK WITH PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Institutions participating in the National Task Force were funded by FIPSE to develop new models of better information. One important way in which CHOICE differed from the Task Force was in its effort to test the viability of voluntary cooperation among institutions to improve their information. Institutions participating in CHOICE received no funding from FIPSE and no direct support from CHOICE. Indeed, institutions agreed to participate knowing that undertaking a campus information improvement project would cost both staff time and institutional money.

During the first year CHOICE prepared and distributed publicity designed to interest colleges and universities in joining the project as participating

Figure 1. Summary of Primary Project Activities by Year.

Year 1

9/1/77-8/31/78

- Established Project offices at Syracuse University
- Selection and convening of Advisory Board
- Selection of participating colleges and universities
- Preparation and conduct of Balmoral Workshop for participating institutions
- Development and national distribution of slide/tape presentation, "Focus on CHOICE."
- Development of CHOICE Clearinghouse of student consumer information
- Preparation of CHOICE View
- National distribution of newsletter, CHOICE Comments

Year 2

9/1/78-8/31/79

- Initiation of information improvement projects at participating institutions
- Data collection for graduate outcome study (5 participating colleges)
- Data collection for attrition study (13 participating colleges)
- Initiation of Project sponsored research on the role of college information in student college choice
- Operation of CHOICE clearinghouse
- On-site visits to participating colleges
- Planning for and conduct of Linking Workshop
- Initiation of National Linking Service
- Conference presentations and other dissemination activities

Figure 1. Summary of Primary Project Activities by Year. (concluded)

Year 3

9/1/79-8/1/80

Continuation of information improvement projects at participating institutions

Data analysis, interpretation, and reporting of results of the graduate outcomes and attrition studies for CHOICE institutions participating in those studies

Preparation and publication of Improving College Information for Prospective Students

Design and conduct of two national conferences for college administrators on "Improving College Information for Prospective Students"

Design and conduct of four national conferences for high school guidance counselors on "The High School Counselor as Consumer Educator"

Continued operation of the CHOICE Clearinghouse

Operation of the National Linking Service

Conference presentations and other dissemination activities

Transfer of selected CHOICE activities to other national educational associations

institutions. During the Spring of 1978, applications from the institutions which had applied to participate were reviewed and the final selection of institutions was made. These schools are listed in Figure 2. Each of these institutions designated a three-person campus team which attended a workshop conducted in the Summer of 1978 at Balmoral Woods Inn in Crete, Illinois. At the Balmoral Conference campus teams were introduced more fully to the work of the National Task Force, the issues involved in campus information improvement, and the resources and help they could expect to receive from the CHOICE staff. Campus teams spent much of that conference setting goals for and outlining plans for their campus information improvement projects. An evaluation of the Balmoral Workshop is provided in Appendix I.

In the Fall of 1978, participating institutions began to implement the plans they had developed over the Summer. The details of these projects and the accomplishments of each institution are reported later as Part 5 of this report. The role of CHOICE during this time was to provide technical assistance and encouragement while, at the same time, documenting the activities, problems, and progress of each institution.

During the Fall of 1978, CHOICE offered to assist participating institutions collect new information they might wish to share with prospective students in three areas -- graduate outcomes, reasons for attrition, and enrolled students' ratings of student services and academic programs. Initially the Project offered to help design questionnaires, to critique questionnaires developed by participating institutions, and to provide technical advice on data collection methodologies and analysis. It appeared, however, that the college teams were having difficulty achieving consensus among administrators and faculty on their campus regarding appropriate

Figure 2. Project CHOICE Participating Institutions.

American University	Washington, D.C.
Austin Community College	Austin, Minnesota
Ball State University	Muncie, Indiana
California State University at Long Beach	Long Beach, California
Indiana State University: Evansville	Evansville, Indiana
Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne	Fort Wayne, Indiana
Iona College	New Rochelle, New York
Joliet Junior College	Joliet, Illinois
Maryland Consortium - Catonsville Community College	Catonsville, Maryland
Maryland Consortium - Essex Community College	Baltimore, Maryland
Ohio University	Athens, Ohio
Piedmont Virginia Community College	Charlottesville, Virginia
Prairie State College	Chicago Heights, Illinois
Ramapo College of New Jersey	Mahwah, New Jersey
St. Lawrence University	Canton, New York
Southside Virginia Community College	Keysville, Virginia
University of Maryland-University College	College Park, Maryland
University of North Carolina	Chapel Hill, North Carolina
University of South Dakota	Vermillion, South Dakota

items for their questionnaires. This was sidetracking efforts of some of the teams to collect data comparable with the other participating colleges. Since the collection of comparable data was an important issue for CHOICE, the Project staff revised their offer of technical assistance. If participating colleges wished to use the graduate outcomes or attrition questionnaires developed by CHOICE, CHOICE would take care of getting the completed questionnaires from each institution coded and keypunched, and provide each college with the initial descriptive statistics for their respondents. Each college would then be provided with the data for their institution on computer cards so they could pursue the analysis beyond that provided by Project CHOICE. In participating in this arrangement, the colleges also agreed to allow CHOICE to retain a duplicate data deck for use in Project-wide studies. Copies of the questionnaires developed by CHOICE are presented in Appendix II.

Throughout the second year, CHOICE staff documented campus activities and provided encouragement through phone conversations with the campus team members. These occurred approximately three times a year or more often as needed. The phone calls were supplemented by a "College Report Form," completed by each team twice during the second year. At the end of the second year, the Project staff conducted on-site visits to all the institutions actively engaged in information improvement activities.

By this point one institution had withdrawn from the Project, indicating the commitment required by the Project was more than they had anticipated. One other institution remained in the project but did not appear to be making much progress on the plans they had developed at Balmoral.

An original intention of the Project was that participating institutions would revise their college information in the second year and the quality

and impact of that information would be evaluated during the third year. However, as campus teams tried to implement the plans they had made at Balmoral, many found they had underestimated the time it would take to develop campus support for their project and the time it would take to actually revise or develop new information. This was especially true when a team decided they needed to collect new information to share with prospective students. Consequently, as the Project entered the third year, most of the colleges were in the middle of the projects they had chosen to undertake. This meant that the actual production of new informational materials often did not occur until the middle or end of the third year. This precluded the evaluation of the impact of these new materials.

Largely for financial reasons, on-site visits were not conducted during the third year. Instead, in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with CHOICE team members at each school. Additionally, Project staff had an opportunity to visit with team members from most of the colleges at various conferences and professional meetings.

To help tie the participating institutions together and foster a common identification as "CHOICE Schools", the CHOICE staff published Inside CHOICE, a newsletter for the team members of participating colleges. Published quarterly, it reported on what the different colleges were accomplishing, CHOICE-related presentations of team members, and the activities of the Project staff. Inside CHOICE, apart from helping to develop an espirit across participating institutions, also helped teams guage their progress relative to others.

Part 3 of this report describes the activities and accomplishments of the participating institutions.

B. NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION

In addition to working with the nineteen participating institutions, CHOICE offered to provide information and technical assistance to all colleges and universities interested in information improvement which requested our help. One vehicle for this assistance was the CHOICE Clearinghouse. This consisted of literature on student consumerism, institutional efforts to improve information, federal and state information practices, and models of innovative and/or new college information. Much of the collection would be described aptly as "fugitive literature" - pamphlets, speeches, and materials typically not found in a college library.

The availability of the Clearinghouse service was publicized through the national newsletter (CHOICE Comments), the slide/tape presentation (Focus on CHOICE) and in many of our presentations and speeches. By the third year, the Clearinghouse materials filled four file drawers, forty feet of bookshelf space, and two supply cabinets. During 1979-80, we responded to an average of approximately fifty requests per week, ranging from very general requests for "anything you have on..." to very specific requests for copies of a recent paper or a questionnaire. The materials are indexed both by subject and by author (Figure 3 indicates the areas of information available). When a person or institution requested information in a particular area, CHOICE staff would scan the materials in that area and send copies of items that appeared to respond to the request. If a request was for a substantial amount of material and/or required extensive photocopying, a small charge to cover copying costs was applied. Whenever Clearinghouse requests were filled, a CHOICE bibliography, identifying other materials of potential interest, was included.

Figure 3. Subject Areas Included in CHOICE Clearinghouse.

Actions of State Agencies Regarding College Information for Prospective Students

Career Education

CHOICE Publications

College Scholarship Service Publications

Examples from The National Task Force Participating Institutions

Examples and Issues in Student Financial Aid

Federal Documents (Federal Registrar; Congressional Record)

Issues in Student Rights

Issues in Proprietary and Vocational Schools

Issues Surrounding Marketing of Postsecondary Education

Model Information from State Agencies

News Releases

Papers, General (general articles dissertations and news reports)

Postsecondary Accreditation

Publications from The Fund for The Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)

Publications From The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)

Reports from Educational Information Centers

Surveys and Questionnaires

The Clearinghouse served both to respond to a growing volume of mail as CHOICE became widely known and to disseminate the results of our research. People most often contacted the Clearinghouse for the new materials, particularly the recently completed research reports. While asking for the research reports they would also request other items.

At the conclusion of CHOICE, the Clearinghouse will be taken over and continued by The National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) located in Skokie, Illinois. This transfer of activities will help ensure that the Clearinghouse service will continue to be available to the higher education community.

C. RESEARCH ON THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN STUDENTS' COLLEGE CHOICE

Colleges participated in CHOICE for many reasons. Some joined the project primarily from a concern about the mandates of new federal legislation. Others took part out of an ethical concern to provide students with better information. However, many institutions became involved out of the belief that improved information would, in some way, help them recruit students or would help them retain those already enrolled. At the same time, and in apparent contradiction, many individuals, both on the campus teams and in groups that we addressed, displayed skepticism about whether students really read the printed information they receive from colleges. They questioned whether improving printed information would make any difference in admission's recruiting or in the accuracy of student expectations about a college. Answering this question seemed essential to furthering the cause of improved information, and, in some ways, of securing the credibility of the Project.

In the first year, Project staff developed a research plan which would have used an experimental design to determine if students receiving old and new materials differed significantly in their ratings of the accuracy of their information and expectations of college. However, the study would have required that colleges 1) make available updated old material and create improved new materials in the same year, 2) randomly distribute those materials to prospective students, and 3) keep track of who received what. Students arriving on campus the next Fall would then complete a survey of their knowledge and expectations about the college on which students receiving old and new information would have been compared. The study would have provided a strong test of the question, "Does better information make any difference?" However, the study proved unworkable. It was too expensive and logistically cumbersome for the colleges. They felt it would not be possible both to develop new information and maintain old information in the same year or keep track of who received which information.

The research design was modified in the second year. Instead of directly testing the impact of new information, CHOICE asked the various users and distributers of college information about their perceptions of its importance. Additionally, we examined the printed materials colleges typically send for their usability and appropriateness for the intended audience. This was accomplished through a series of studies that spanned the second and third year of the Project These studies will be briefly described.

1. The Effectiveness and Accuracy of College Admissions Practices:

During 1978-79, CHOICE and the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) collaborated in a study of college admissions representa-

tives and high school guidance counselors' perceptions of the effectiveness of current admissions practices and the accuracy of the information students receive through those means. Institutional representatives of all 1706 NACAC affiliated institutions were contacted by mail and asked to complete either the sixty-six item College Admissions Questionnaire or the fifty-seven item High School Counselor Questionnaire (the questionnaires are included in Appendix III). Completed questionnaires were received from over 1300 high schools and colleges for a response rate of 76 percent.

Results of this study are available in:

Dominick, D., R. Johnson, D. Chapman, and J. Griffith, "Effective Admissions Practices: A National Survey," National ACAC Journal, 24, 1, 1980.

Dominick, C., R. Johnson, D. Chapman, and J. Griffith, "College Recruiting in the Next Ten Years," National ACAC Journal, 24, 2, 1980.

Johnson, R., D. Chapman, C. Dominick, and J. Griffith, "Admissions Office Staffing and Policies: How Do You Compare?" National ACAC Journal, 24, 3, 1980.

Chapman, D. and J. Sullivan, "Communicating Effectively With Students; The Choice for Better Information," State University of New York, Financial Aid UPDATE, 3, 3, 1980.

Chapman, D. and S. Gill, "College Advising: Current Perceptions, Future Directions" 1980, CHOICE/NACAC Clearinghouse.

2. Influences on Students' College Choice: A Case Study:

Where do students get the information they use in choosing a college? On what information do they actually base their decision to go to a particular institution? These questions were investigated through interviews with freshmen students at Ball State University, one of the CHOICE participating institutions.

Results of this study are available in:

Chapman, D. and R. Johnson, "Influences on Students' College Choice: A Case Study, 1979, CHOICE/NACAC Clearinghouse.

3. An Assessment of College Recruitment Literature: Does the High School Senior Understand It?:

This study investigated the reading difficulty level of college recruitment literature and the ability of college-bound high school students to understand the terminology frequently used in college admissions.

Results of this study are available in:

Johnson, R. and D. Chapman, "An Assessment of College Recruitment Literature: Does the High School Senior Understand It?" Research in Higher Education, 11, 4, 1979.

Do the printed materials colleges provide to prospective students influence students' college choice? Results of the studies described above indicate:

-- The mailing of catalogs and brochures to interested prospective students is the single most widely used recruitment activity.

-- It is rated by both high school guidance counselors and college admissions officers to be the single most accurate source of college information for the students.

-- The mailing of catalogs and informational brochures, up request, is considered by both groups to be among the five admissions practices students rely on most in making a college decision.

-- During the next ten years, admissions officers expect to rely increasingly on the direct mailing of printed materials in recruiting prospective students.

-- However, the most effective admissions activities, from the perspective of the guidance counselors and college admissions officers, continue to be high school visits by the college admissions officer and campus visits by the prospective students.

-- Students use the information they receive from a college primarily to confirm a college choice they had already made on other grounds:

a) Students are more apt to be influenced by the advice of

their friends, their family and their guidance counselors, by the location and cost of an institution, and the availability of desired programs at a college.

b) Colleges often lose prospective students between the time the students are admitted and actually arrive on campus. Printed information, if it serves to confirm students' college choice after they have been admitted, may help improve admissions yield.

-- High school students in the upper third of the admissions test scores can expect to receive catalogs and brochures from between fifty and seventy-five colleges.

a) Prospective students don't know how to process that much information.

b) Most of the information will end up in the wastebasket, unread.

-- College catalogs are written at a reading difficulty level appropriate to an upper division college student or college graduate. Catalogs frequently use vocabulary that students do not understand.

Overall, it appears that the printed materials that colleges provide to prospective students are important in students' college choice, though perhaps not in the way or to the degree that high school guidance counselors or college admissions officers think. Moreover, the materials are often not written at a level or in a vocabulary that the prospective student understands.

D. NATIONAL LINKING SERVICE

While CHOICE was conceived as a three year project, one intention from

the outset was to develop and organize resources to assist institutions wishing to examine and revise their information even after the conclusion of the Project. To help accomplish this CHOICE launched the National Linking Service in the Spring of 1979.

The goals of the Linking Service were: a) to make low cost consulting services available to institutions that wished to review and improve the information they provide to students; b) to establish a national network of trained better information consultants to facilitate the success of new campus-based information projects; and c) to attract and involve a "second-wave" of sixty participating institutions, thereby increasing the potential impact of CHOICE.

The Linking Service was designed and developed in six distinct phases:

	Purpose	When and Where Accomplished
Stage I	-- Train six institutional team members to serve as faculty for the Linking Service Workshop	April, 1979, AAHE Conference, Washington, D.C.
Stage II	-- Faculty meets with other institutional team members to train them as consultants	June, 1979, Linking Service Workshop, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Stage III	-- Faculty and trained consultants meet with institutional team representatives from second-wave institutions	June, 1979, Linking Service Workshop, Ann Arbor, Michigan
Stage IV	-- Linking Service announced nationwide and consulting group in place	September, 1979
Stage V	-- Linking Service was operated by CHOICE staff during the third year of the Project	August, 1979 through August, 1980

Stage VI -- The Linking Service was taken over by the National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC). The names of the Linking Service consultants were also included in the consulting service of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC). August, 1980

Stage I involved the identification by the CHOICE staff of six individuals who would accept multiple responsibilities within the Linking Service. First, these individuals would be responsible to train other institutional team members to serve as consultants during the Linking Service Workshop (June, 1979) and throughout the third year of the Project. Second, this six person group would be the faculty for the Linking Service Workshop, wherein a second wave of participating institutions would take part in developing plans for institutionally based better information projects. Third, these six individuals would themselves serve as consultants to schools requesting assistance during the third year.

The six member "faculty group" was invited to the AAHE Conference in Washington, D.C. during April 1979. At AAHE the CHOICE staff engaged these individuals in a three-day training program. The program was designed to familiarize the group with CHOICE materials, review the role of a consultant, "role play" being a consultant, and provide the opportunity for actual consultation with conference participants interested in conducting better information projects.

Stage II, during the first day and a half of the Linking Service Seminar Workshop (June 24-25, 1979), involved the faculty group in training team members from participating institutions to serve as Linking Service consultants.

Stage III involved both the faculty and newly-trained consultant groups meeting with institutional representatives who had applied and been accepted to participate in the final segment of the Linking Service Workshop. A listing of the institutions that took part in the workshop is presented through Appendix IV. This group of institutions included community colleges, private colleges, and major public universities. Institutional representatives included those with responsibilities for publications, financial aids, public relations, admissions, and student affairs.

The agenda for the Linking Workshop was similar to that for the 1978 Balmoral Conference. In essence, the aim of the three-day program was to help participating institutions develop action plans that could be made operational upon return to their respective campuses.

With the experience gained by consultants during the Linking Workshop and their work on better information projects at their institutions during the 1978-79 academic year, CHOICE was ready in the Fall, 1979 to make the Linking Service available nationwide.

Stages IV commenced in October, 1979, when Linking Service Brochures (Appendix V) were mailed to 3,200 colleges. In addition, the service was advertised in The Chronicle of Higher Education and the publications of various professional associations and organizations.

During Stage V, the Project staff coordinated the Linking Service activities. Between the end of the Linking Service Workshop (June, 1979) and the conclusion of the Project (August, 1980) we received about sixty-five requests from institutions for additional information about the Linking Service. These resulted in three actual requests for Linking Service consultants, all of which were met.

The Linking Service was not used to the extent we had anticipated. We investigated the reasons for the low usage by checking with individuals who

had attended the summer workshop and those who had called us during the year. Three reasons seem to account for the low use:

1. The summer workshop was quite successful. Many participants felt they had learned a great deal and that their summer experience, in combination with the materials we distributed at the workshop, were sufficient to get them started on a review of campus information.
2. The service was launched at the beginning of a year that was financially difficult for many institutions. Despite the low cost of the service, a number of institutions indicated that cost was a factor in their decision not to hire a Linking Service Consultant.
3. After the initial national announcements, the Project did not continue to aggressively advertise the service. This was due largely to the amount of time the staff was spending in other dissemination activities during the third year.

Stage VI. At the conclusion of the Project, the Linking Service was transfered to the National Association for College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) in Skokie, Illinois. Additionally, the names of the Linking Service consultants were included in the consulting service of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges. Through these means, the expertise and resources of individuals who have worked in developing better campus information will be continued beyond the conclusion of CHOICE.

E. DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

Much of the Project dealt with developing new expertise, information, and ideas. The other major part was concerned with getting those ideas shared with others who might benefit from them. Hence, the Project pursued

a very aggressive dissemination strategy on two fronts: 1) convincing the higher education community that information for prospective students needed to be improved, and 2) sharing the knowledge developed by the Project on how to accomplish that improvement. The primary dissemination activities included:

a) Publications describing the Project and the need for better information
b) The slide/tape presentation, "Focus on CHOICE"
c) The CHOICE View
d) "CHOICE Checklist for Evaluating College Recruitment Literature"
e) Publications reporting research on better information
f) Publicity through the professional and popular news media
g) CHOICE Comments
h) National Linking Service
i) National Dissemination Conferences
j) Clearinghouse
k) CASE Monograph: Improving College Information for Prospective Students
l) Presentations at professional meetings.

Each of these will now be described and, where possible, the effectiveness of each will be discussed. This section will conclude with an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the dissemination activities.

1. Publications Describing the Project and the Need for Better Information

At the beginning of the Project, before the participating institutions had many results to report, the primary emphasis of the Project was letting colleges know of the need for better information and describing the activities and resources of CHOICE. To do this a number of articles were submitted to professional journals that had a readership potential concerned with the

issues addressed by the Project. In the long run, these articles proved to be quite useful; first, to reach to audience of the journal and, second, as reprints to hand out at conferences or through the Clearinghouse. Handing out journal reprints which described the Project seemed to convey more legitimacy than merely handing out mimeographed internal documents. The problem with using journal articles to "spread the word" was the long delay between writing an article and having it appear in print. The articles published are listed in Appendix VI and appear in their entirety in Section III of this final report.

2. Slide/Tape Presentations: Focus on CHOICE

This slide and cassette tape presentation, lasting approximately twenty minutes, was mailed (free of charge) to institutions or groups considering issues in better information. The slide/tape described the history of consumerism in higher education and the work of the National Task Force, gave examples of what some colleges were doing to improve their information, and presented the purposes and services of Project CHOICE. The slide/tape was accompanied by the "Guide to CHOICE", a manual describing how to use the slide/tape and covering some of the questions that frequently arise in discussions about improving information. Also enclosed were 1) the "CHOICE Sampler", a collection of additional examples of new information some institutions are currently providing their applicants, and 2) the "CHOICE Checklist", which will be described later.

The Project had forty copies of the slide/tape, which were distributed as part of the Clearinghouse. By the middle of the third year (January, 1980) over 321 colleges, professional groups, and individuals had viewed Focus on CHOICE. After viewing the slide/tape, the person responsible for

the showing completed a "Discussion Leader's Summary Report" and returned it to the CHOICE office. A total of 129 of these forms, or about forty percent were completed and returned. Overall, the slide/tape was considered to be somewhat useful. Most viewers considered the information to be extremely important but difficult to implement. A full report of this evaluation is presented in Appendix VII.

3. The CHOICE View

The CHOICE View was a manual compiled by CHOICE to help higher education institutions consider what types of information they might present in order to help prospective students improve their decisions about which college to attend. It served as a primary resource at the Balmoral Workshop.

4. CHOICE Checklist for Evaluating College Recruitment Literature

If a college doesn't have a problem with the information it provides to students, it doesn't need help. If the college does have a problem, it typically doesn't want help. That is, the college personnel may be reluctant to admit a problem to outsiders, preferring to try to solve the problem themselves. It seemed to the CHOICE staff, then, that we could help many colleges best by providing criteria they could use in their own internal evaluation of their printed materials. The criteria in the Checklist were drawn from 1) federal regulations and recommendations, 2) recommendations of professional associations, 3) research studies, 4) and the experience of Project CHOICE.

The Checklist was distributed with the slide/tape presentation, Focus on CHOICE, at presentations made by CHOICE staff, and, eventually, as a chapter in the CASE monograph (discussed later).

5. Publications Reporting Research on Better Information

The research activities of the Project were described earlier in this report. Whenever possible the outcomes of that research were submitted for publication through appropriate professional and scholarly journals. We believed that this strategy would 1) help reach a wide audience of college administrators, faculty, and high school guidance counselors, 2) contribute to the credibility of the Project as the research was published, and 3) place the results of our research in an arena where it would be easily available to other researchers concerned with the impact and techniques of information improvement. A list of the publications appears in Appendix VI. The articles themselves appear in Section III of the final report.

6. Publicity Through the Professional and Popular News Media

This publicity came in two ways. First, CHOICE paid for advertising in The Chronicle of Higher Education to 1) solicit participating institutions, 2) invite participation in the Linking Service Workshop, 3) announce the Linking Service, and 4) to advertise the national dissemination conferences. For the dissemination conferences, we also contacted fourteen other national associations that have newsletters asking them ton announce our conferences. Nearly all of them did so.

Beyond our formal advertising, CHOICE received mention in a number of newspapers and magazines including The New York Times (widely reprinted), The Chicago Tribune, Change Magazine, and MS Magazine.

7. CHOICE Comments

The CHOICE newsletter, CHOICE Comments, was published twice each year and mailed to at least three administrators in each of the 3200 accredited colleges and universities in the United States. The newsletter described CHOICE activities, announced CHOICE services, discussed issues of national

importance regarding student consumerism and better information, and listed the resources available through Project CHOICE. The newsletter was particularly helpful in announcing new resources available through the Clearinghouse, as indicated by the volume of requests for Clearinghouse information after each mailing of CHOICE Comments. An assessment of whether people read the newsletter is presented later.

8. National Linking Service

The Linking Service is described in detail earlier in this report.

9. National Dissemination Conferences

In the third year of the Project, a primary agenda was to share the experience of the CHOICE participating institutions with other colleges and universities concerned about their college information. To do this, CHOICE, in cooperation with NACAC, designed and conducted two workshops for college administrators interested in how their college could examine and, if necessary, improve its information for prospective students. With the help of NACAC, we were able to schedule these workshops for locations where CHOICE had not had much previous direct exposure. Hence, the conferences were held:

February	12-13, 1980	at	Southern Methodist University Dallas, Texas
February	27-28, 1980	at	Tulane University New Orleans, Louisiana

The conferences examined the strategies and issues involved in campus faculty information improvement. The conference faculty consisted of selected individuals from the CHOICE institutions, who could report on their own experience and that of their institution, and CHOICE staff. The agenda and brochures describing these conferences is presented in Appendix VIII.

Enrollment at both conferences was limited to fifty participants. We were fully subscribed at both conferences and had to turn away between

twenty and thirty people from each. These workshops differed from previous conferences conducted by CHOICE in that participants came more out of curiosity than out of any firm commitment by their institution to review or revise the information for prospective students. In evaluations of the conferences participants indicated they thought that 1) the program was well designed and well presented, 2) the issue of better information was of moderate importance, and 3) that they were unsure if they would implement information improvement activities on their campus.

At the same time we were conducting these college conferences, we recognized that our work with the college audience was attending to only half of the issue of better information. The needs of the high school guidance counselor in working with college-bound students were also an important area of concern. Our collaboration with NACAC helped identify the need for some greater attention to the role and function of the high school counselor in college advising. In response, we designed and conducted four national workshops entitled "The High School Counselor as a Consumer Educator":

December 11, 1979	at	College of Notre Dame Belmont, California
December 12, 1979	at	Pitzer College Claremont, California
February 11, 1980	at	Southern Methodist University Dallas, Texas
February 29, 1980	at	Tulane University New Orleans, Louisiana

Participants examined ways in which guidance counselors can assist students in becoming more critical consumers of education, particularly in helping them interpret the college information they receive. Again, registration was limited to fifty people. All conferences were fully, or nearly fully, enrolled, though not all of the preregistered participants attended. Most

of the conferences had between thirty and forty people in attendance. The agenda and pre-conference publicity are presented in Appendix VIII.

10. National Clearinghouse on Student Consumer Information

The Clearinghouse is discussed earlier in this report.

11. CASE Monograph: Improving College Information for Prospective Students

The Projects originally supported the development of a monograph length manuscript to serve as a resource booklet at the dissemination conferences. The conference workbook (158 pages) was based on the experience of the nineteen participation institutions and the chapters were written by team members from some of those schools.

At the conclusion of the dissemination conferences, the conference workbook was accepted by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) for publication in their monograph series under the title Improving College Information for Prospective Students. It is available from CASE, 11 Dupont Circle, Suite 400, Washington, D.C. 20036, at a cost of $10.50 per copy. A copy of the conference version of the manuscript is included as Report II of this final report.

12. Presentations at Professional Meetings

In addition to the conferences CHOICE sponsored, Project staff made presentations at a large number of professional meetings. The content of these presentations varied but often consisted of describing the purposes and activities of CHOICE, describing the activities of the participating institutions, and reporting on the research and other accomplishments of the Project. Whenever possible we got on programs at annual meetings of national organizations, such as AIR, NACAC, AERA, and NASPA. However, we also spoke frequently to regional groups or special interest groups. For

example, we conducted seven regional workshops in the state of Minnesota for high school counselors and college administrators. A list of the presentations made by CHOICE staff appear in Appendix IX.

13. Effectiveness of Dissemination Activities

A great deal of time and money was invested in our dissemination activities. Did they work? Were some activities more effective in reaching college administrators than others? At the end of the Project, we conducted a study of the impact of our dissemination activities.

The Study: In the Spring, 1980, a random sample of 200 names were selected from the mailing list for CHOICE Comments. The mailing list used consisted of admissions directors of all accredited colleges and universities in the United States (about 3200 institutions). The individuals on the list had been mailed copies of CHOICE Comments at least three times over the three year span of the Project. Hence, we can assume that all individuals on the list had an opportunity to read about CHOICE. Moreover, other administrators at their institutions had also received CHOICE Comments, which had been published five times prior to the study.

Each of the 200 admissions directors were contacted by mail and asked to complete a short questionnaire on which they indicated if and how they had heard about Project CHOICE (see Appendix X). A total of 136 people responded for a response rate of 68 percent. Of those responding, 60 percent indicated they were not familiar with the activities of the Project. The fifty-four admissions directors who were familiar with the Project (40 percent of those responding) indicated they heard about it in the following ways:

How did you hear about Project CHOICE?

How they heard about CHOICE	Number of Persons	Percent of Those Familiar with the Project
CHOICE Comments (newsletter)	38	70.3%
A presentation at a professional meeting	11	20.3%
A journal article	6	11.1%
A conversation with individual(s) from participating institutions	4	7.0%
Ad in The Chronicle of Higher Education	11	20.3%
Other	9	14.8%

Total unduplicated number of respondents = 54

*26 respondents heard about CHOICE only through CHOICE Comments

*12 people heard about CHOICE through CHOICE Comments plus at least one other source

*5 people heard about CHOICE only through a presentation

*4 people heard about CHOICE only through an ad in the Chronicle

*7 people heard about CHOICE only through other sources

After three years of receiving the CHOICE newsletter, 60 percent of the admissions officers surveyed indicated they were not familiar with the Project. Moreover, an additional 12 percent of the respondents who had heard of the Project did not cite the newsletter as the source of their information. This suggests that admissions officers either tend not to read their mail (at least the bulk rate newsletters that cross their desk) or that the newsletters do not get by the admissions office secretary.

Twenty-one percent of the total respondents had heard about CHOICE through some means other than the newsletter. Given the multitude of issues

and innovations competing for the attention of college admissions directors, a 21 percent recognition rate seems quite acceptable. Indeed, the number of people who heard about the Project through some means besides the newsletter (twenty-eight people) exceed the number who report they heard about the Project only through the newsletter (twenty-six people).

I. IMPACT ON FEDERAL AND STATE POLICY REGARDING STUDENT INFORMATION

One goal of CHOICE was to assist in the formulation of state and federal policy alternatives relating to improving college information available to prospective students. The activities related to this goal included: 1) the preparation of general policy statements, 2) the formulation of specific recommendations relevant to the 1980 reauthorization of the Higher Education Amendments, 3) recommendations for how the newly created state/federal Educational Information Centers (EIC's) might assist colleges to improve the information they provide to students, 4) evaluation of the extent and quality of information on educational opportunities in each state, 5) the identification for colleges of specific federal laws and regulations pertaining to information colleges should make available to students. Each of these efforts will be described.

1. General Policy Statements:

To influence the development of policy relating to better information, at institutional, state and federal levels, CHOICE formulated several policy statements in the form of publications. "Improving Information for Student Choice: the National Effort" (NACAC Journal, 23, 1, 1978) and "Does Truth Have Consequences? Improving Information for Better College Choice" (Liberal Education, 65, 4, 1979), are articles designed to influence members of the higher education community to attend to the issue of better information for student choice.

2. Specific Policy Recommendations:

As a part of a group of educators convened in Ann Arbor in late 1978, CHOICE staff developed recommendations to be considered within the better information provision of the 1980 Higher Education Reauthorization Bill. Subsequent to that meeting CHOICE staff appeared before state agencies and at regional H.E.W. hearings in an effort to define and recommend better information provisions we believe would advance the cause of better information.

Although it is difficult to assess the impact of such activities, CHOICE staff were pleased to see some of their recommendations reflected in the bill that was marked up by the House Education Subcommittee this Fall. Specifically, the proposed subcommittee bill deleted the provision that colleges provide attrition data to students upon request. Also, a new provision requesting colleges to indicate through which groups they are accredited, and to provide accreditation reports to students upon request, was added. CHOICE had endorsed both provisions.

3. Educational Information Centers:

These centers were established in most states under provisions of the Higher Education Amendments of 1976. The purpose of these centers was to provide information on postsecondary educational opportunities to the citizens of each state. During 1979 and 1980, CHOICE staff participated in national conferences devoted to helping E.I.C. directors clarify and define the activities of the E.I.C.'s. Appendix X presents the "Program Proposal for Educational Information Centers" presented by CHOICE.

4. Evaluation of State Educational Information Activities:

In order to assist in the formulation of policy alternatives at state and federal levels, it was necessary first to identify what different govern-

mental units were already doing in the area of educational information for students. Hence, one thrust of CHOICE research was to identify what state level agencies for four-year colleges and for community/junior colleges were doing to provide information on educational alternatives to prospective students in their state. The four-year community/junior college agencies in all states (except two which don't have such agencies) were contacted and asked to share with us copies of any material they might provide to students seeking information on educational alternatives in that state. These materials were evaluated across a series of criteria pertaining to the completeness and usability of the materials. Documents that provide particularly exemplary models of state-level information were identified.

Results of these studies are available in:

Gill, J., D. Chapman, and J. Miller Jr., "The Activities of State Agencies in Providing Information to Prospective Students," Journal of Higher Education, 1980 (in press).

Chapman, D., M. Jewell, and J. Miller Jr., "Better College Information for Students: The Role of the State Two Year College Agency," 1980 CHOICE/NACAC Clearinghouse.

Results of these efforts indicated that:

a) Most states produce information which is or could be used to provide information to students on educational opportunities within their states. While some states limit this function to information on opportunities in public institutions, most of the states cover the private institutions as well.

b) States present their materials in a variety of ways, with directories and brochures being the most common.

c) The quality of the information that states provide varies greatly.

d) Administrators of state agencies are sometimes not aware of the information activities in which their own agency or other agencies within their own state are engaged.

5. Summary of Federal Laws and Regulations:

Many college administrators are aware that federal laws and regulations regarding information colleges should provide to students do exist. However, most administrators are not familiar with the specific provisions of the law. To assist these individuals, CHOICE compiled a list of the specific requirements of the laws and regulations requiring institutions to provide student consumer information. These summaries are presented as Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Federal Law and Regulations Requiring Institutions to Provide Student Consumer Information.

What section of the Federal Statute requires institutions to provide student consumer information?

Section 493A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended by Section 131 of the Education Amendments of 1976.

The Federal Rules and Regulations implementing the law are contained in Chapter I of Title 45 CFR, Section 178.3, entitled Information Dissemination Requirements.

What are the specific requirements?

Institutions must provide to prospective and enrolled students, upon request, the following information:

- a complete description of all student financial aid programs, including all Title IV programs, state aid programs, and institutional aid programs
- a statement of the rights and responsibilities of students receiving aid under Title IV programs
- cost of attendance
- refund policy
- student eligibility
- criteria used by the institution to select financial aid recipients and determine award amounts
- description of academic program, including faculty, other instructional personnel and physical facilities
- number and percentage of students who have completed a particular course of study (if figures are available)
- description of retention rates in terms of each institution's enrollment patterns and types of students

Each institution must have an employee or a group of employees available on a full time basis to assist all students in obtaining information. However, institutions with small enrollments may apply to the Commissioner of Education for a waiver of this requirement.

Who must comply with these regulations?

All institutions receiving administrative allowances under one or more of the Title IV programs must comply with the regulations.

What agency is responsible for compliance?

Bureau of Student Financial Assistance
Office of Education
U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Figure 5.

SECTIONS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965 AS AMENDED 1972 AND 1976
STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS AND RELATED COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Statute	Federal Rule & Regulation	Brief Description of Pertinent Section(s)
Section 428 of Title IV[1] of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended 1972.	45 CFR Part 177.64 Provision of Information to a prospective student. Regulation issued February 20, 1975.	Institutions participating in the Guaranteed Student Loan Program must provide to prospective students placement data on students who have graduated from career-related academic programs.
Section 493A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended 1976.	45 CFR Part 178.3 Student Consumer Information Regulation issued December 1, 1977.	Institutions must provide to prospective and enrolled students, upon request, information about financial aid assistance, cost of attendance, refund policy, student eligibility and academic programs. Each institution must have an employee available on a full time basis to assist students in obtaining information.
Section 497A of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended 1976.	45 CFR Part 168 Subpart H- Procedures for the Limitation suspension or termination of institutional eligibility for programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 Regulation issued. December 23, 1977.	Regulations allow the Office of Education to immediately terminate, curtail or suspend funding of student aid programs that violate the guidelines. Office of Education is given the authority to take emergency action against an institution, by cutting off funds for 30 days, that it suspects of violating guidelines for federal student aid programs. A college that has had its eligibility for student aid programs cut off cannot be reinstated for at least 18 months. Under the termination proceedings, the Office of Education must notify the institution of the reasons for the decision. The termination will begin 20 days after the date of the notification. If the institution requests a hearing or submits a statement as to why its funds should not be cut off, the termination can be postponed or recinded.
Section 497 of Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended 1976.	45 CFR Part 168 Subpart B - Standards Relating to Audits, Records, Financial Responsibility, Administrative Capability and Institutional Refunds.	Proposed regulations require institutions to maintain admissions records showing the educational level and other relevant qualifications of each student admitted. Requires institutions to develop a system for verifying the consistency of information supplied by students on various documents and provide financial aid counseling to those found eligible for aid.
	Subpart C - Misrepresentation. Proposed Regulations Issued August 10, 1978	In the interest of student protection, the Office of Education may limit, suspend or terminate the participation of an institution substantially misrepresenting its education programs, financial charges, or employability of its graduates.

Title IV

[1]Authorizes the student financial aid assistance programs.

PART III. INSTITUTIONAL OUTCOMES OF PARTICIPATION IN CHOICE

A. DESCRIPTION OF OUTCOMES

Figure 6 lists the institutional outcomes of participation in CHOICE. Three specific types of outcomes are presented: 1) the creation and development of new publications or products (e.g., films); 2) the revision or expansion of existing publications; and 3) the use of data for internal decision making purposes. The benefits of institutional involvement in CHOICE, which could be considered an outcome, will be discussed in a section which follows.

Of the institutions which developed new publications, the majority produced brochures regarding financial aid. This probably was the case for three reasons: a) the Higher Education Amendments of 1976 state that institutions must provide clear and complete information about financial aid. Given the date of these amendments, institutions have been considering improving financial aid information for the past few years; b) financial aid is often an area that is centrally controlled and considered an administrative function. As such, it would be easier to change materials in this area than in those areas where numerous people desire to influence the process and expect to be directly involved in decision making; and c) perhaps most important, financial aid can be a critical factor within a students' decision to attend college. Therefore, institutions are concerned about providing comprehensive, accurate and understandable financial aid information to students.

The new financial aid materials developed by Project CHOICE schools generally provide the following:

1) definitions of the terms unique to financial aid;

Figure 6. Institutional Outcomes of Participation in CHOICE.

Institution Name	New Publications or Products	Revisions or Expansion of Existing Publications	Data Used for Internal Decision Making Purposes
American University	A financial aid brochure	The first section of the catalog has been rewritten	Data from the Alumni Questionnaire are reviewed within individual academic units for evaluation purposes.
Austin Community College	A financial aid brochure	The format of their catalog has been changed to reflect the CHOICE view (i.e., the use of more complete information, graphs, etc.)	CHOICE attrition data were used within the North Central Evaluation process. The president has used data gathered through CHOICE activities within speeches made on campus and within the community.
Ball State University	No new publication per se	The information sheet for each academic area was revised	Through involvement with Project CHOICE, the control of the content of informational materials now resides with the CHOICE campus team. Outcome and attrition data are currently being used within decision making circles.
California State University at Long Beach	A film, used within the recruitment process, which attempts to effect a better match between prospective students and the institution	Given the extensive list of new products developed, existing products were not altered.	CHOICE materials and data have been incorporated within speeches made by the president both on and off campus

Institution Name	New Publications or Products	Revisions or Expansion of Existing Publications	Data Used for Internal Decision Making Purposes
California State University at Long Beach (continued)	A 3-piece set of financial aid materials A prospectus which provides general information about the college and serves as a reference book for students Eight 30-second T.V. announcements which describe the college Descriptive brochures for five academic programs An advising packet, which incorporates much of the material and data developed within the other activities		Some materials collected through CHOICE activities have been shared with targeted groups (Board of Trustees, High School Guidance Counselors) to raise their understanding of the institution
Catonsville Community College	A financial aid brochure	The CHOICE view has been incorporated within thier catalog (i.e., more complete information is shared, vague statements have been deleted)	Data were not collected, and therefore not used, for internal decision making purposes
Essex Community College	There were no new publications developed	Their continuing education tabloid has been reworked; the current catalog was reviewed for wording useage and readability (this resulted in the rewriting of sections of the catalog)	Data have not been used for internal decision making purposes

Institution Name	New Publications or Products	Revisions or Expansion of Existing Publications	Data Used for Internal Decision Making Purposes
Indiana State University: Evansville	A financial aid brochure	The content of the Alumni Newsletter incorporated much data from the outcomes study	Faculty have reviewed outcomes information to assess their programs
Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne	A financial aid brochure	There have been no new major revisions of existing publications	Data from attrition and outcomes studies are just starting to be used within academic departments
Iona College	No new publications per se	Data from the outcomes study were reported in the Alumni Newsletter	Outcomes data have been reviewed by Chairpersons and department heads to review graduates' impressions of various academic departments. Evaluations by enrolled students of the institution's informational materials were used in assessing the effectiveness of those materials
Ohio University	Developed a new informational brochure, "Explore Ohio University" A transfer information brochure A financial aid brochure Individual academic program brochures	No major revisions in other areas	Information collected will be used for internal decision making purposes, although this has not yet occurred Evaluations by enrolled students of the institutions' informational materials were used in assessing the effectiveness of those materials

Institution Name	New Publications or Products	Revisions or Expansion of Existing Publications	Data Used for Internal Decision Making Purposes
Piedmont Virginia Community College	An informational brochure: "A Look At P.V.C.C." A financial aid brochure	All of the brochures that describe each curriculum	They have surveyed parttime students to assess involvement in special interest courses and make programming decisions about these courses.
Prairie State College	There were no new publications	None at this stage	Although not currently in use, data from the outcomes study will be used by faculty and administrators for self-assessment purposes
Ramapo College of New Jersey	There were no new publications	The financial aid brochure was revised Information regarding patterns of attendance was added to the catalog Information regarding placement data was added to the catalog	Data have not been used for internal decision making. However, overall involvement in CHOICE has shaped institutional awareness about a variety of issues: consumerism marketing, student outcomes Project Director has made speeches within the local community regarding CHOICE and consumerism
St. Lawrence University	A new film The development of information packets for students entitled the "Personal Educational Profile" (PEP brochures). The packets include brochures about: student outcomes; residential life; a guidebook	The flyer materials provided to external groups have been redesigned Information regarding summer programs has been redesigned	Information collected through CHOICE activities has been used internally for curriculum evaluation purposes

Institution Name	New Publications or Products	Revisions or Expansion of Existing Publications	Data Used for Internal Decision Making Purposes
St. Lawrence University (continued)	A series of brochures describing various academic departments Departments have developed full descriptions of courses offered. This is done for enrolled students.		
Southside Virginia Community College	An outcomes brochure	Sections of the catalog have been revised	Data collected through CHOICE will be used by Project Director in regional presentations to professional organizations Evaluations by enrolled students of institutional information have been conducted; these evaluations have been used to redesign and revise publications
University of South Dakota	A prospectus sent to all prospective students A financial aid brochure	Sections of the catalog have been altered and data collected through CHOICE activities have been added	Data (outcomes and attrition) were used by deans to assess the satisfaction of undergraduate students with their academic experience

2) explanations of the financial aid programs available;

3) examples of student budgets;

4) time lines of when to apply; and when awards will be granted, within an academic calendar year; and

5) student responsibilities concerning repayment of monies borrowed.

In some instances, apart from providing the above financial aid information, participating institutions created additional brochures that focused on a wide variety of student financial concerns. For example, California State University published a three piece set of financial aid brochures which covered such topics as the cost of a college education, how financial aid packages are determined, the development of monthly budgets, and tips on how to stretch a monthly budget.

Formatting within the new financial aid brochures was an important issue for participating institutions. Most gave careful consideration to include a table of contents, a glossary of terms, and the use of graphs and charts to present information. Further, it is clear that many institutions attempted to de-jargonize the language used within the materials produced.

The second most frequently listed product developed as a result of CHOICE activities was a descriptive brochure of the college. Four participating CHOICE institutions developed such brochures: Ohio University, Piedmont Virginia Community College, University of South Dakota, and St. Lawrence University. These brochures usually attempted to provide students with information about the curriculum, the faculty, the student body, campus physical facilities, and the community in which the school is located.

Some institutions, apart from attempting to develop new printed materials, produced films. California State University at Long Beach created a film, the purpose of which was to effect a better match between

prospective students and the Long Beach campus. This film has been used for recruiting purposes within California.

St. Lawrence University produced a new film which devotes major portions to student descriptions of the university. In addition, the film serves as a good vehicle for prospective students to gain a better understanding of the location and setting of the college.

The most comprehensive written product to come out of the Project was the prospectus developed by California State University at Long Beach. In the lexicon of CHOICE, a prospectus is a broad based publication which attempts to provide information to students not normally presented in the catalog or viewbook. For example, it might contain information about class sizes, student reaction to their college experiences, faculty and student profiles, and special student services that are available. Often, the material presented would appear to be controversial in that it reports negative as well as positive aspects of the institution.

For many participating institutions, apart from the development of new products, involvement with CHOICE resulted in the expansion or revision of current publications. In almost all instances, institutional representatives report that the "CHOICE View" was considered within revision efforts, irrespective of the type of material under consideration. The CHOICE view recommends that colleges provide complete, useful, accurate, and understandable information to students.

The revision of materials usually centered on the catalog and descriptive brochures for academic departments. In addition to these two publications, as a result of the outcomes study and relying on data collected through that study, articles were developed for the alumni newsletters at two institutions: Indiana State University at Evansville and Iona College.

Given the nature of CHOICE activities, and the research undertaken, it was often the case that data collected to meet on-campus CHOICE objectives were also used for additional internal purposes. Figure 6 reflects that fact. In particular, as a result of the attrition and outcomes studies conducted at many institutions, large data bases were generated within these two areas which responded to questions well beyond those concerned with better student information.

The outcomes study information has been used frequently by academic departments in an attempt to gauge the satisfaction of graduates with their academic experience. In a sense, these data have served as one means of departmental self-assessment. In contacting representatives at participating schools this Spring (1980), many state that the outcomes data gathered through CHOICE will continue to be used for internal decision making purposes. Additionally, they indicate that the collection of this type of data will now become a regular occurrence.

Attrition study reports, developed by CHOICE for participating institutions, were completed this past Spring. Many schools are still reviewing their study data and making determinations as to the best way to use it. For one school (Austin Community College), attrition study data were incorporated within their North Central Accreditation Report. Others are reviewing the practical implications of the findings. Specifically, since the attrition study focused on why students planned not to return to college and the differences between stayers and leavers in terms of extent of involvement in campus activities, administrators are able to identify institutional factors or characteristics which may be contributing to attrition. This practical orientation makes it possible to consider institutional actions to alleviate those troublesome factors.

As Figure 6 indicates, institutional representatives often used using the data collected through CHOICE studies in speeches and public appearances, both on and off campus.

As one example of data being used for internal decision making purposes, it is interesting to consider the experience of Ball State University. At first glance, one would assume that Ball State was lackadasical in completing on-campus CHOICE activities. However, this is far from the truth. Prior to involvement in CHOICE, Ball State provided comprehensive and complete information to prospective students through the use of multiple information publications. Their objective in being involved with CHOICE was to centralize decision making about publications and information dissemination within one office. Before CHOICE, numerous offices, academic departments and individuals were involved in providing information to students. This created problems of consistency in terms of the messages conveyed to students and was deemed to be an expensive way to disseminate information. As a result of working on CHOICE activities, Ball State has now centralized publication efforts, largely with members of the CHOICE team. They believe this is a very positive outcome of involvement.

B. INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

Why is it that some institutions were successful in reaching objectives, and in producing numerous new materials, while others were not? To answer this question a telephone interview was conducted with each of the Project CHOICE directors at participating institutions during Spring, 1980. The interview questions appear in Appendix XVI. The remarks that follow, which identify the ingredients that led to success at particular campuses, are gleaned from the telephone interviews conducted.

Figure 6 supports the claim that in terms of new materials produced, California State University at Long Beach and St. Lawrence University were the most successful of the participating institutions. In carefully reviewing the interview responses of the Project directors from these two institutions, several common factors emerge which appear to attribute to their success:

-- The Project Directors at each school were given release time and specific responsibility for CHOICE activities. This was often not the case at other schools;

-- CHOICE activities were incorporated and became a part of larger institutional actions to recruit, retain, and meet the informational needs of students;

-- Team membership did not change over time, the team met regularly to discuss issues; the team was comprised of campus opinion leaders;

-- CHOICE activities had top administrative support;

-- Line item funding was created to support CHOICE activities;

-- The Project Directors were excited about CHOICE and enthused about campus participation in this national project;

-- Both internal and external resource people were identified and called on to help satisfy CHOICE objectives.

Release time appears to be a major characteristic of successful projects. For schools that experienced difficulties in getting untracked, many report that other responsibilities prohibited them from concentrating attention on CHOICE. The comment often was, "we just didn't have time to follow through on plans." Without release time, CHOICE activities became secondary within the day-to-day responsibilities of the "Project Director."

In the case of University of California at Long Beach and St. Lawrence University, specific amounts of release time, to fulfill CHOICE responsibilities, were granted to Project Directors. For Long Beach, the director was assigned half time to complete and guide campus CHOICE activities. At St. Lawrence, during the first year of the project, 20 percent of the directors time was assigned work on CHOICE.

The fact that CHOICE activities were one part of a larger college action plan was an important dynamic contributing to success. Long Beach, subsequent to involvement in CHOICE, was in the early stages of developing an enrollment enhancement plan. The development of new publications, and the attrition study, fit nicely within the context of their overall plan.

Similarly, St. Lawrence was evaluating and considering the revision of their recruitment activities and advising services. Again, CHOICE activities seem to comfortably fit with their plans.

The composition and working habits of the teams at respective institutions also made an important difference in terms of success. Where team membership changed over time, and where teams failed to meet frequently during their first year, success was impaired. Also, if the team did not consist of campus opinion leaders, or individuals who possessed positional power, team influence was markedly reduced on campus. For example, at both Long Beach and St. Lawrence, key administrators played central roles as team members (the Vice President for Administration at Long Beach; the Associate Dean of the College at St. Lawrence).

Consistent with the findings regarding successful innovations, where top administrative support was in evidence, projects appeared to do well. Conversely, if there were major changes in key administrative positions, or the president was not sure of the potential benefits of involvement

with CHOICE, activities moved slowly. At both Long Beach and St. Lawrence the president took an active interest in CHOICE and conveyed their enthusiasm to team members. Moreover, in the case of St. Lawrence, through the efforts of the project director, CHOICE activities were fully outlined and explained to the Board of Trustees and supported by that group.

Funding of CHOICE activities became a major problem during the life of campus projects. If line item funding was not built into yearly budgets, monies for CHOICE activities had to be skimmed off the top of other line item accounts; a difficult practice at best given the financial situation at most institutions.

The second difficulty in relation to funding was the fact that most schools underestimated the costs of the projects they undertook. Given the broad based nature of information improvement (i.e., research, writing, design and layout, printing) and the rapid escalation of costs within these areas, many schools were half way through projects when budget problems developed. The advice of team members, for those about to start projects, is to overestimate expenses by as much as 50 percent at the outset of the project.

Lastly, the enthusiasm and commitment of project directors were critical to success. In those instances where directors believed in the integrity of CHOICE concepts, and felt that providing more complete and thorough information to students had particular merit, CHOICE activities were sustained over the two year period.

C. INSTITUTIONAL BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT

College representatives reported several institutional benefits from involvement in CHOICE.

- Communication between departments and administrative departments improved;
- CHOICE served as a means of institutional self assessment;
- Institutions developed new awareness regarding a number of issues: consumerism, research practices, the role of better information within a students' college choice decision, student outcomes, and student attrition;
- Involvement in CHOICE resulted in the completion of studies that would not normally have been undertaken;
- A national network of institutional representatives interested in better information was developed;
- Lastly, new products were developed which better helped the institution describe itself.

In reviewing the above listing it is apparent that the process of developing better information for students had important payoffs for the institution. This is an important concept.

CHOICE activities resulted in the improvement of communications between departments and divisions that heretofore had had diverse interests and responsibilities. At Indiana State University at Evansville, the student affairs and academic affairs divisions had some difficulty in articulating a common philosophy regarding student development and the role their respective divisions would play within that development. Both had clearly marked certain responsibilities as being on their turf and stated that they did not want others intruding on their territory. CHOICE activities have helped to breakdown these barriers.

As noted earlier, through involvement in the attrition and outcomes studies, many institutions gathered data which have been used for multi-

purposes. For example, apart from improving information, data have been used for self assessment purposes. Specifically, in reviewing attrition data, many have been able to ascertain student reasons for dropping out. Outcomes data have been used by academic departments to assess the satisfaction and reaction of graduates regarding their academic experience.

CHOICE schools report that another benefit of involvement focused on an increased awareness of several issues: the process of developing federal legislation, survey research methods, evaluation practices, and the impact of printed materials within a students' college choice decision. This awareness helped to make institutional representatives more able to fulfill their day-to-day responsibilities.

CHOICE has resulted in the development of a network of college administrators interested in better information. This network provides people the opportunity to share common experiences, seek advice and receive support from a wide array of individuals. This help sustains efforts at individual campuses and makes it more likely that information projects will be successful. CHOICE participants report that this is one of the important benefits of being involved in the Project.

Finally, for a number of schools, new materials have been produced which should prove to be especially useful to students. These materials highlight the importance of making good college choice decisions. They provide students with comprehensive information in a style that is useful and understandable. Often, these materials help students shape the important questions to ask in talking with college representatives and communicating with various colleges. For many schools, these materials are but a first step; participants plan to continue to refine and develop additional materials for student use.

PART IV. PROJECT CHOICE: LOCATION AND STAFFING

Project CHOICE was originally located in the Department of Higher/Postsecondary Education in the School of Education at Syracuse University. At the end of the first year, the Project Director, Dr. Joan Stark, accepted the position of Dean of the School of Education at The University of Michigan. For the last two years (9/78 to 8/80), then, the Project was located in the Center for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Michigan.

At the end of both the first and second years, the Project experienced substantial turnover in staff. In the first year this was caused by the move from Syracuse to Ann Arbor. The Assistant Director, Dr. Patrick Terenzini, left the Project to become the Director of Institutional Research at the State University of New York at Albany. Dr. Stark's new position as Dean of the School of Education at Michigan left her with less time to devote to the Project. Consequently, two new Assistant Directors, Dr. David Chapman and Mr. John Griffith, joined the Project in its second year. At the end of that year (Summer, 1979), John Griffith accepted the position of Director of Admissions at Davidson College. In the third year, then, Dr. David Chapman served as Associate Director of the Project. Mr. Russell Johnson, previously a Research Associate with the Project, served as Assistant Director. A complete list of Project staff is provided in Figure 7.

The frequent turnover of staff caused some disruption to the continuity of the Project, particularly between the first and second years of the Project. On the other hand, the Project was fortunate to have a staff committed full time to the Project. Team members from participating institutions could call anytime and expect to talk to a staff member. A project as complex and productive as CHOICE could not have functioned effectively with part-time staff.

Figure 7. Project CHOICE Staff.

Year ONE

Dr. Joan S. Stark	Director
Dr. Patrick T. Terenzini	Assistant Director
Ms. Martine F. Hammond	Research Associate
Mr. Edwin B. Harris	Research Associate
Ms. Constance Saldicco	Research Associate
Mr. James VanPatten	Research Associate
Ms. Daphne Higa	Secretary

Year TWO

Dr. Joan S. Stark	Director
Dr. David W. Chapman	Assistant Director
Mr. John V. Griffith	Assistant Director
Ms. Sue A. Holden	Principal Secretary
Mr. Russell H. Johnson	Research Associate
Mr. Charles A. Dominick	Research Associate
Ms. Judith I. Gill	Research Associate
Mr. James R. Sullivan	Project Assistant

Year THREE

Dr. Joan S. Stark	Director
Dr. David W. Chapman	Associate Director
Mr. Russell H. Johnson	Assistant Director
Ms. Sue A. Holden	Principal Secretary
Mrs. Constance M. Taylor	Secretary
Ms. Nancy J. Thier	Research Associate
Ms. Marilynn M. Jewell	Research Associate
Mr. James R. Sullivan	Research Associate
Mr. John B. O'Grady	Project Assistant

The CHOICE staff was assisted by an Advisory Board which was appointed the first year. The Board met annually and was composed of eleven people (see Figure 7) selected to represent different segments of the educational community. The Project staff found the Advisory Board to be insightful in comments, constructive in their suggestions, and committed to the need for better information for prospective students. They served both to react to staff ideas and to suggest and facilitate new proposals. At the end of the final Advisory Board Meeting, each member was asked to complete an evaluation of the Project and of our use of the Advisory Board. Overall, the Board was extremely positive about the accomplishments of the Project and their own involvement in it. In particular, they indicated:

1) The Advisory Board meetings were well organized. They received necessary materials in the mail before each meeting which clearly laid out the purpose of the meeting and the topics to be considered.
2) They felt they were actively involved in deciding the future course of Project activities.
3) They liked the opportunity to be updated, in person, on Project activities and accomplishments.
4) They felt the CHOICE staff clearly valued Board input and that they (the Board) helped place better information issues in new contexts.

PART V. FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT

Earlier in this report we identified factors related to the success of campus projects. While the accomplishments of the participating institutions weighted heavily in the overall assessment of the Project there are an additional set of factors related directly to the CHOICE staff, that contributed to the impact and overall success of CHOICE. Moreover, they are factors important to consider in the design and conduct of other large-scale multi-institutional projects. Nine of these factors will be discussed.

A. Full-time Staff. CHOICE was staffed by a full-time Associate Director, Assistant Director, and Secretary. This level of staffing meant that team members from participating colleges could nearly always contact a staff member on short notice. Likewise, loyalties and priorities of staff members were clearly to the Project, reather than being divided across other institutional responsibilities.

B. Status of Project Director. The Project enjoyed a "halo effect" from the national reputation of the Project Director, Dr. Joan Stark. Her position, first, as Chairperson of the Area of Higher Postsecondary Education at Syracuse University and, later, as Dean of the School of Education at The University of Michigan, gave her a national platform from which to raise issues germane to better student information. People acquainted with the high quality of her work were often positively disposed toward the Project even before becoming completely familiar with it. Likewise, Dr. Stark's national contacts opened important opportunities for the Project.

C. Status of The University of Michigan. Closely related to the last point, the location of CHOICE at The University of Michigan and, more specifically, within the Center for the Study of Higher Education, had important benefits for the conduct of the Project. Turning to "Michigan" for advice or for conference speakers seemed more palatable to some educators from other colleges than turning to a lesser known or lesser respected institution.

D. Multiple Activities. CHOICE operated on many fronts simultaneously - operating a Clearinghouse, supporting institutional research, conducting project-wide research, coordinating writing activities, running workshops. The intent was to appeal to as broad a variety of different needs and interests as possible. The staff recognized that the credibility people assigned to the Project varied with the interests and experiences of those individuals. Multiple activities helped us keep a broad constituency.

E. Multiple Payoffs from Activities. The Project staff emphasized activities that yielded multiple payoffs, to the participating institutions and to the Project itself. For example, the attrition and alumni studies provided data important to many groups and offices on campus, even if they were not particularly concerned about better student information. The teams directing the study at each college could negotiate for campus support by pointing to the many uses of the data beyond satisfying their own agenda. By supporting these studies, CHOICE staff built relationships with the participating schools while, at the sometime, developing large data bases which supported other project-wide inquiry. Another example is the monograph published by CASE. It provided opportunities for authorship and visibility for individuals from the participating colleges; it provided a reference document for our dissemination conferences; and, it provided national visibility for the Project when it was published by CASE. Careful attention to activities with multiple

payoffs seems essential to the success of large scale projects.

F. Recognizing Expertise of Others. The Project staff recognized and drew on the expertise and experience of the CHOICE team members at the participating colleges. Whenever possible they were asked to represent the Project at meetings, participate on convention programs, speak at CHOICE dissemination conferences, and contribute to CHOICE publications. This added the credibility of those who had actually run a campus information improvement project to Project presentations and publications. It gave the college team members entree to opportunities they might not otherwise have had.

G. Adequate Travel Money. On-site visits to our participating institutions were described earlier as an important ingredient in the success of our work with those schools. Similarly, adequate funds to allow the staff to speak and participate in regional and national conferences were extremely valuable for Project visibility nationally.

H. Rigor of Initial Workshop. The intensity, organization, and comprehensiveness of the initial workshop at Balmoral Woods Inn provided a common experience and developed an espirit among team members and staff. The conference helped develop a shared set of definitions, understandings, and expectations that made work with and between the campus teams much easier throughout the duration of the Project.

I. An Issue of Growing Importance. There were moments when the CHOICE staff were unsure about the importance college administrators attached to better student information. However, by the third year of the Project, we were receiving a steady stream of inquiries, our dissemination conferences were oversubscribed, and staff were in constant demand as conference speakers.

Some of this can be assigned to the work and reputation of the Project. However, most of this popularity must be attributed to the increasing competition among colleges for students. Over the life span of the Project colleges were giving greater attention to ideas and activities that might help their student recruiting. In this respect national events worked to the advantage of the Project.

Project CHOICE represented a major national effort to help colleges voluntarily improve the information they provide to students. In the view of Project staff, advisory board, and participating institutions, the Project was a success. It did not solve the problems students have in choosing a college. However, it did help identify the role of information in students' college choice. It helped document the process colleges go through in improving campus information. And, it developed resources for use by colleges engaged in better information activities.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Number	Title, Author, Date	Price
A	Decision Type, Structure, and Process Evaluation: A Contingency Model - Marvin W. Peterson, 1973.	$2.00
B	The Department: Old and New Motifs - Marvin W. Peterson, 1973.	$2.00
C	Higher Education and the Federal Government - Wilbur J. Cohen, 1973.	$2.00
D	Assessing Quality in Doctoral Programs: Criteria and Correlates of Excellence - Robert T. Blackburn and Paul E. Lingenfelter, February, 1973.	$2.00
E	The State Level Performance Assessment Process: Concepts, Perspectives, and Issues - Marvin W. Peterson, Fall, 1973.	$2.00

RESEARCH AND PROJECT REPORTS

Number	Title, Author, Date	Price
I	Educational Hierarchies and Social Differentiation: The Structural Patterns of Chicano Participation in Colleges and Universities in the Southwest, 1972-76 - Marvin W. Peterson, Project Director, and Rodolfo Garcia, May 15, 1980.	$6.00
II	Project for Faculty Development Program Evaluation: Final Report - Robert T. Blackburn, Project Director, Alice Boberg, Colman O'Connell, and Glenn Pellino, June, 1980.	$5.00
III	A Center for Helping Organizations Improve Choice in Education: Final Report of Project CHOICE - David W. Chapman and Russell H. Johnson, Joan S. Stark, Project Director, August, 1980.	$5.00
IV	Presidential Views of Higher Education's National Institutional Membership Associations: Summary Report - Joseph P. Cosand, Study Director, Gerald Gurin, Marvin W. Peterson, and Frank R. Brister, August, 1980.	$4.00

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